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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000064

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SUBJECT: FRENCH POLOFF SHARES INSIGHTS ON GUINEA'S POLITICS

REF: CONAKRY 63

Classified By: ECONOFF T. SCOTT BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. Over the course of a 25 January meeting, the French Political Attache, who may be an agent with French External Security, shared France's perspective with DATT on a wide range of topics related to recent events in Guinea. Contact addressed maneuverings inside the CNDD, Guinea's external relations with Venezuela and Germany, information on civilian politics, the economy, and the possibility of Al-Qaida cells extending their reach into West Africa. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) On 25 January, DATT met with Christophe Ledroumaguet, the political counselor and suspected agent for France's External Security Agency (Direction Nationale de Securite Externe - DGSE) at the French Embassy in Conakry. Over the course of the meeting, Ledroumaguet shared his Embassy's and agency's perspective on recent political events in Guinea.

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INTERNAL CNDD MANEUVERINGS  
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¶3. (S) Ledroumaguet told DATT that Senegalese President Wade advised CNDD-President Dadis Camara to appoint Kabine Komara as prime minister. He said that Wade and Komara have "been close for years." The DGSE agent also informed DATT of Wade's recent request to a prominent NGO in Senegal for monetary support for the CNDD (reftel).

¶4. (S) On the subject of more recent political maneuverings inside the CNDD, Ledroumaguet told DATT that the DGSE believes that General Toto Camara, currently Minister of Security and first Vice President, is the only CNDD member who is a democrat and supports change. Though he did not explicitly state that France intends to back Toto Camara, DATT said he was left with the impression that the French believe they have no viable alternative.

¶5. (S) According to Ledroumaguet, Dadis' entourage is currently trying to isolate Toto Camara because they see him as a threat to Dadis' power. As an example, Ledroumaguet noted that many of the traditional responsibilities of the Minister of Security have been removed and grafted onto a new Secretary of State for Special Services, Anti-Narcotics, and Organized Banditry. Reportedly, Toto Camara is now only responsible for the day-to-day running of the police force, while the new ministry is pursuing larger criminal acts, such as the possible prosecution of controversial business tycoon Mamadou Sylla.

¶6. (S) Shifting focus, Ledroumaguet also claimed that Minister of Defense and Second Vice President Sekouba Konate wants to assassinate former mutiny leader and current Minister of Presidential Security Claude Pivi, but noted that he did not know if any operation had been planned. Further,

Ledroumaguet claimed that Konate had been "drunk since the coup" and passed out in front of the Dadis Camara on the evening of 23 January. He added that both Dadis Camara and Konate have been independently surveilling CNDD press secretary Aboubacar "Idi Amin" Camara, but he did not specify the reason for this.

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VENEZUELA EXTENDS HAND OF FRIENDSHIP  
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¶17. (S) On the subject of external relations, Ledroumaguet said an unnamed CNDD official recently traveled to Venezuela to meet with members of the Venezuelan government, perhaps even Venezuelan President Chavez himself. Though he said he did not know what was discussed at the meeting, he stated that Chavez offered to be Guinea's "new Western Hemisphere contact."

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CHINA IS ABSENT  
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¶18. (S) Ledroumaguet said that France had picked up very little information on Chinese involvement in the time both before and after the coup. DATT noted that contact seemed slightly surprised that the Chinese had been keeping a low profile throughout recent events.

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GERMANS EXPAND CONTACTS YET SHARE LITTLE INFO WITH EU  
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CONAKRY 00000064 002 OF 002

¶19. (S) Ledroumaguet stated that the German Embassy in Guinea seems to be making the most of Dadis Camara's connection to Germany by building ties with the new government. However, he noted that the Germans have not been very forthcoming about their relationship with the CNDD and have not shared much of the information they have gained from these ties with other European delegations in Conakry. Though he admitted that he did not know the Germans' true motivation, he speculated that closer ties might make it easier for German companies to pursue future contracts offered by the GoG, such as a possible multi-million dollar airport renovation. However, he said he had recently checked with unnamed EU economic bodies, which reported that no German businesses had recently expressed interest in Guinea.

¶10. (S) As an aside, Ledroumaguet noted that Paris has essentially placed the same restrictions on contact with the CNDD as the Department has on Embassy. French Embassy officials must now seek approval from Paris before meeting with CNDD members.

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KOUYATE'S AND TOURE'S STARS ON THE RISE  
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¶11. (S) Addressing civilian politics, the DGSE agent said France believes that former Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate personally requested the two large electrical generators that arrived via a Libyan cargo aircraft on 24 January from Libyan President Mohammar Qaddafi. Libya later announced that these generators--along with the aircraft itself--were gifts to the CNDD. The French source said that Kouyate will use the goodwill created by the generators as a springboard from which to reenter the Guinea political scene, claiming that former President Lansana Conte blocked his overtures toward the Libyans while Kouyate was in office. Ledroumaguet said that the military might use the plane for practicing paratrooper jumps, and the French DATT reported seeing the plane flying over Conakry on 24-25 January.

¶12. (S) Ledroumaguet also said he believed that political

opposition leader Sidya Toure was crowding out one-time presidential candidate Alpha Conde. Conde currently has few funding sources, he said, and little to no cash on hand.

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NEWLY MINTED MONEY GOES INTO CIRCULATION  
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¶13. (S) On the economy, Ledroumaguet reported that the CNDD is hoarding hard currency to pay international debt, and using newly printed Guinean franc notes to make end-of-month payments to civil servants and teachers (septel).

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THE SPECTER OF AL-QAIDA IN GUINEA  
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¶14. (S) Ledroumaguet relayed that the French government now believes that Al-Qaida is extending its reach further south in West Africa. As reason for this, he cited the murder of several French tourists in Mauritania in 2007. The group responsible was later arrested in Guinea-Bissau and confessed to being part of an Al-Qaida cell. The Guinea-Bissauan authorities learned from examining their passports that the group members had passed through Guinea, where they were reportedly harbored for one week by the Islamic Cultural Center in downtown Conakry.

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COMMENT  
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¶15. (S) Many of Ledroumaguet's comments echo information that Embassy has received from other sources. Senegal appears to be taking a keen interest in Guinea's internal politics while Libya has been quick to extend a helping hand. Divisions within the CNDD continue to fester as various power players maneuver to advance their individual interests. END COMMENT.  
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